

Justice for All

HYBRID LAW FIRM HAS FOR-PROFIT AND NONPROFIT ARMS

We see a difference when you involve people in what is happening rather than allowing them to be victims.

Attorney Rebeca E. Salmon, Esq. created a unique business model that pairs a for-profit law firm with a nonprofit organization that provides legal services for vulnerable individuals, including children throughout the Southeast.

A Salmon Firm and the Access to Law Foundation share a building in Norcross. “The for-profit firm underwrites everything; it bought the building, the furniture, the technology, and pays all the employees,” explained Salmon, Managing Partner. Four attorneys plus paraprofessionals and administrative staff work for the for-profit and volunteer for the non-profit.

A Salmon Firm specializes in divorce, child custody and complex immigration cases and frequently handles high-asset clients. Access to Law focuses on abused and abandoned children and family unity cases. Many clients are children without legal status in the U.S. who are under state care. The foundation is a preferred provider for DFACS agencies in South Carolina, North Carolina and Alabama and frequently works for county agencies in Georgia. It also handles cases for immigrants who are victims of horrendous crimes, such as sexual assault, who might qualify for a special visa.

Access to Law, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, operates on the belief that everyone should pay a fair price for its services, so clients are charged on a sliding scale based on their income. A payment schedule is available. Paying something for the services “helps empower people to have ownership over their life. We see a difference when you involve people in what is happening rather than allowing them to be victims,” Salmon said.

Access also mentors immigrant children the agency helped to gain legal status. “They have to stay in school and graduate, learn English, and stay out of trouble. We want them to understand that gaining legal status

is a great benefit, but they have a part in it,” Salmon said. Salmon, a former marketing executive, entered law school after turning 40 and spent her first two years as an attorney helping abused children while her salary was paid for by a fellowship. When the funds ran out, she created her unique hybrid organization so she could continue to help the area’s most vulnerable people.

Law students often think the only way to be successful is to join a big law firm, Salmon said. Her firm works to counteract that misconception by offering internships and externships to law students interested in nonprofits. “We show them it is rewarding, interesting and they can still make a decent salary,” Salmon said. “Quality of life is the payoff. I kick people out of the office at 5:30 every day so they can have a life.”

Access to Law does as much as possible with the resources it has. Salmon doesn’t apply for grants, which often have strings attached, and fundraising is decidedly low-key. “A few people have found out what we do and support it, but panhandling is not a good use of our time,” she said.

To learn more about the services offered or to make a donation, contact A Salmon Firm (770-559-4935, asalmonfirm.com) or Access to Law Foundation (770-685-1499, accesstolawfoundation.org).

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